

**COMMISSION ON AGING**  
**MEETING SUMMARY MINUTES**  
October 28, 2010

<b>Members Present</b>	<b>Members Absent</b>
Morton Davis	Harriette Rindner
John Honig	Nhora B. Murphy
Leslie Marks	Grace Whipple
Alicia Bazan-Jimenez	
Judith Welles	<b>Liaisons</b>
Vivien Hsueh	Linda Berg-Libraries
Miriam Kelty	Sam Korper-COH
Alan Kreger	Pat Lesnick–Vital Living Committee
Myrna Cooperstein	Austin Heyman-Office of Community Partnerships
Jack Sprague	Pazit Aviv-HOC
Elaine Binder	Les Trachtman-Arts Education Alliance
Spencer Schron	John Miers-Commission on Persons with Disabilities
Mona Negm	Gail Gunod-Green HOC
Judith Levy	
Zoe Lefkowitz	<b>Guests</b>
Marcia Pruzan	Nguyen Minh Chau, OCP, Senior Fellow for Community Empowerment
Tammy Duell	Sarah Gotbaum, Older Women League
Beth Shapiro	Irwin Goldbloom, past Chair, COA
<b>Members Absent</b>	<b>Staff Representatives</b>
Paula Post	John Kenney - HHS
Robert Tiller	Odile Saddi – HHS

**REPORT FROM THE CHAIR – Elaine Binder**

The Chair opened the meeting at 9:00 AM.

**September Minutes**

Commission on Aging (COA) members voted to approve the September meeting minutes with the notation that the December legislator’s breakfast will begin at 8 AM and amend the October meeting minutes to indicate that Beth Shapiro did attend the October meeting.

**Schedule Changes**

Due to conflicts with the Veterans and Thanksgiving Day holidays:

- The November Executive Committee will meet on Tuesday, November 9 (Calhoun Drive);
- The next COA meeting will be held on November 18 (Ratner Museum);
- The December COA meeting/holiday party will be held December 16<sup>th</sup> at a site and time to be determined.

## **PRESENTATION**

### **Budget Priorities: Jay Kenney and Odile Saddi**

The budget situation in the County is dire. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and all County departments are examining their operations to determine how to make necessary cuts. On November 1, the Department of Health and Human Services will host a Community Forum on the FY12 HHS budget to hear from the community about the priorities. The Commission will be testifying there.

Should the ambulance fee be defeated in the November 2 election, there will be an additional \$14 million shortfall to account for, and the following will occur:

- DHHS would have a \$100,000 reduction in In-Home Services. In addition, \$500,000 would be eliminated for miscellaneous DHHS contracts and being passed through to provider organizations.
- The Recreation Department will be cutting approximately \$114,000 for senior programming; this represents only 10 % of all Recreation Department cuts. This would affect 800 seniors currently participating in 11 community centers in the County providing senior services.
- There are \$1million in cuts affecting maintenance and basic supplies across all county departments affecting recreation, community, and senior centers.
- The Call N Ride program budget would be reduced by 50%

In FY12, the County faces additional budget reductions. For planning purposes, DHHS is working with a 10 % figure, but the actual figure is not yet available. This will be 10% of the budget that will be revised if the ambulance fee is defeated.

DHHS is reviewing every program funded at the County, State, and/or Federal levels. The County is examining the size of its supplement to programs funded by the Federal or State governments, comparing the amount of service provided relative to other jurisdictions and states, identifying specific services that no longer require rate supplementation, reexamining contracted services, and privatization/outsourcing of services that are non-mission critical and that can be performed by the private sector. Even for mandated programs, the County's contributions have generally been higher than those of most other jurisdictions in the state and throughout the country.

Jay reviewed general strategies and criteria for determining the upcoming budget. Program priorities include Public Health, Protection, Basic Needs, Individual Health, Prevention, Self-Sufficiency, Community Outreach, and Quality of Life Programs. Programs and services are prioritized to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the community so that those in greatest need receive the fewest cuts possible. The goal is to keep people as safe, healthy, and independent as possible given resources available.

Odile reviewed in-depth the Area Agency on Aging programs and trends over the past five years and the circumstances in which they find themselves today and in the coming year. These critical programs include Adult Protective Services (which is a state mandate), In-home services, Medicaid Waiver, Respite Care, Adult Day Care, Adult Foster Care, as well as Congregate and Home-Delivered meals. She discussed potential cuts for each in terms of staff reduction, service reduction, and waiting lists.

**NOTE:** For details on Odile's and Jay's reports, see handouts A (General Strategies and Criteria for Budget Development), and B (Net Funding Increases/Decreases for DHHS Services to Seniors FY05-FY11)

COA members voiced a number of concerns, including:

- Many on waiting lists will end up needing Adult Protective Services if the County is not able to provide needed services earlier.
- There is a need for additional data about people who need services but never access the system.
- Many services are tied together in a continuum; by missing one, a person can lose a range of services critical to his or her welfare.
- The Latino community is concerned about the effect of cuts on seniors who may be in the County illegally. Although several Federal and State programs look at immigration status, the County does not take status into consideration for eligibility. For example, Adult Foster Care now serves eight undocumented individuals. However, members noted that many undocumented seniors and their families may be fearful of seeking out needed services.
- It was suggested that some people are receiving assistance that might actually not need it, taking it from others who do. Jay and Odile believe that the County tightly monitors their own programs to avoid any fraud, but would look into information pointing to abuse of the system. Do report any such suspected instance to Odile or Jay.
- Alan Kreger noted Mr. Leventhal's concern that because County services are so good, older people may move here just to access them. Jay and others surmised that older people move here to be closer to family members and that the high cost of living in the County might deter many others from moving here.

Elaine suggested and commissioners agreed on three highest COA budget priorities, which she will incorporate into her testimony on November 1. The three programs listed below provide a needed continuum of care for those at highest risk. Their budget is \$6 million, of which the County contributes about half.

1. Assessment and Continuing Care Services
2. In-Home Services
3. Medical Assistance Waiver Programs: The County currently serves 400 people in this program; while it contributes \$500,000 of local tax support million of dollars from the federal and state governments are provided to eligible clients who reside in supervised settings in the community.

The Commission will have several additional opportunities to review and revise these priorities as the year progresses.

## **COA REPORTS**

### **Treasurer's Report – Vivien Hsueh**

Vivien has moved all COA monies to a checking account that will be free if the balance does not fall below \$1,000. There is currently \$1,456.35 in the account. COA members should submit any invoices for repayment to Elaine, who will pass them on to Vivien for electronic payments. Vivien will make forms available for members who wish to make future contributions.

### **Legislative Breakfast – Jack Sprague**

The COA Legislative Breakfast for State legislators will be held on December 3 at Holiday Park. The goals are to educate the legislators about seniors in this County and COA issues and to press for advocacy for those issues. A “meet and greet” will take place from 8:00-8:30 AM, followed by a brief presentation of COA priorities, and opportunities for the legislators to briefly present on their issues pertaining to seniors. Elaine Binder, Jack Sprague, Bob Tiller, and John Honing will prepare for COA members talking points and information about the legislators who are about to be sworn in. They also will provide a handout for legislators about COA issues, along with a copy of the COA Call to Action.

It was noted that the League of Women Voters has published a guide on the candidates’ issues and positions for the November election; not one candidate mentioned seniors. It will be important to educate legislators about the changing demographics in this County as they pertain to seniors, as Montgomery County seniors show the largest change in demographics of any county in the state.

Finally, there will be a January 25<sup>th</sup> statewide rally to preserve State Department of Aging funding, sponsored by United Seniors of Maryland, of which COA is now a member. Jack will send Commissioners more information and arrange for tickets for those who plan to attend.

### **COA Nominating Committee – Alan Kreger**

The Nominating Committee, chaired by Alan Kreger, along with Mona Negm, and Spencer Schron proposed Grace Whipple as First Vice Chair to replace Alan when he retires from the Commission, with all other officers remaining in their positions: Elaine Binder, Chair; Beth Shapiro, Second Vice Chair; Vivien Hsueh, Treasurer; Marcia Pruzan, Secretary. Commission members voted to approve this slate as recommended. There are four current COA vacancies; it is anticipated that requests for applications will be going out shortly and that the Nominating Committee will review applications in December and January, after which they will make recommendations to the County Executive.

### **Seniors Today Taskforce – Marcia Pruzan**

Marcia Pruzan and Diane Vy Nguyen chair the Task Force, along with members Paula Post, Austin Heyman (OCL), Mike Bruen (Communications Office), and Judy Stiles from the Recreation Department and Pat Davis from the Vital Living Committee. The Task force held its first telephone conference call in which it planned the November taping to be shown in December. Mike Bruen is inviting the County Executive and Chuck Short to make short appearances on the show, and will develop a montage of highlights of the first 100 shows. The next Conference call to plan the December show is scheduled for November 4<sup>th</sup>.

A question arose about non-English-speakers’ access to Seniors Today. While there are issues relating to resources and staffing, Austin suggested that the County’s Communication Workgroup should address this need.

### **Communication and Community Outreach Committee:**

Judy Welles and Spencer Schron reviewed the Committee’s strategic plan for the COA’s Call to Action. The overall strategy calls for targeting key audiences of decision makers and stakeholders and includes a series of activities, some of which already are under way. Among activities outlined are many involving development of key messages, a closer link with media, and closer

work with the county Communications Office to ensure that the Call to Action and other COA interests are promoted widely and posted on the County and senior websites. Spence has drafted a letter that Elaine will send to stakeholders/partners to: 1) update them on COA activities since the last meeting, 2) invite them to participate on COA committees and work on recommendations from summer studies, and 3) to schedule another stakeholders meeting. Nhora Murphy, Beth Shapiro, Grace Whipple, and Spence Schron will plan the next meeting of stakeholders/partners.

On behalf of the COA, John Honig congratulated the Committee on their work on the strategic plan.

## **LIAISON REPORTS**

### **Libraries-Linda Bird**

The libraries have had drastic cuts to staff, materials such as periodicals, hours of operations and senior programs. Each library now has a “senior corner” with large print materials. The Vital Living Committee is a major partner in this effort.

### **Recreation – Phil Smakula**

There have been a number of cuts in Senior Center operations affecting staff and activities across the board:

- There is no longer a Senior Program Team in the Recreation Department.
- The Silver Sneaker program, which has been offering seniors free use of weight and exercise rooms, will now begin charging \$50 per year effective Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 and will have reduced hours.
- Each center is looking at times of greatest facility use to determine new hours of operation, but it is thought that afternoon hours will be extended if morning openings are delayed. (Jack Sprague pointed out that consideration should be given to many seniors who would prefer using centers during the early morning hours rather than later in the afternoon.)
- There is a 75% cut in maintenance budget. Anyone seeing a needed repair should let the center director know about it, but there could be a 2-4 week delay in making repairs. Department of General Services must also determine budget priorities related to repairing or replacing broken equipment.
- There will be a delay in completing the Mid-County Center, which is supposed to have a senior wing.

Members agreed that the COA must continue to be a voice for seniors in keeping senior programming alive in County senior and recreation centers.

### **Office of Community Partnership – Austin Heyman**

The subcommittee on Civic Engagement met this week to discuss management of the drastic cuts that have taken place at the Volunteer Center. The subcommittee is looking for ways to engage pro bono workers and the “Experience Corps” in Montgomery County to supplement staffing needs.

### **Vital Living Committee-Pat Lesnick**

The Committee is working to coordinate with Libraries on distribution of its new and comprehensive Guide to Vital Living for people age 50 and older in the County. Pat also reported on an October exhibition of Jewish art in the County Office Building.

**Commission on Health-Sam Korper**

On October 11 the Commission on Health (COH) testified at a hearing with the County Council about its primary focus for the upcoming year: obesity in general, and childhood obesity in particular. Problems seen in childhood affect health in subsequent and out years; being healthy at 30 and 40 influences later health. The COH is pushing the idea that there needs to be a social compact that covers a spectrum of services for good health at every age. COA members also stressed the need to focus on what seniors can do to stay healthy, such as exercise, healthy nutrition, and prevention activities.

**Commission on Persons with Disabilities – John Miers**

Aging and disabilities are tightly interwoven in terms of overlap of needed services and sources of funding. It is important that these two groups work more closely together.

**NEW BUSINESS****Primary Care Coalition Meeting – Elaine Binder**

The Primary Care Coalition is the organization through which the County's free clinics are funded. The Coalition, HHS, and Mr. Leventhal had a full-day meeting on health care reform and its implications for Montgomery County. Nine of the approximately 300 people attending chose to work in a subgroup on the topic of aging; Secretary of the State Department of Aging Lawlah facilitated the group, which developed an action plan. Elaine would like the Health and Wellness Committee and the entire COA to be briefed on the plan.

**National Public Radio Segment on Aging in the Community – Miriam Kelty**

- Miriam Kelty reported on her recent National Public Radio "Kojo" segment covering Aging in the Community. She mentioned the COA and the Blueprint, etc. There are many different models for Villages; all have in common a cadre of volunteers; many use full or part-time paid staff; many find it challenging to get seniors to use services. Most follow membership model where resident pays a small annual fee. Chevy Chase at Home Village was the first model in Montgomery County to charge a membership fee. Retaining members and raising funds to pay salaried employees are challenges. A Washington Area Villages Federation is forming with about two dozen villages in the area that hope to offer mutual assistance and share resources.

**Plans for November COA Meeting – Elaine Binder**

- Rollin Stanley from Park and Planning Department will address the COA at the next meeting. We will provide him with a copy of the proposal for purpose-built affordable senior housing and will ask about implementation plans, with a focus on the White Flint area.
- More time will be devoted to committee reports, which were short during this meeting because of lengthy budget discussion.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM, October 25, 2010.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Marcia Pruzan, Secretary